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CABINET.

BRITISH PROPAGANDA IN GERMANY.

*Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.*

FOR some time past the Foreign Office have been giving close attention to the problem of getting the British point of view known to the German public, and I am now in a position to bring before the Cabinet a number of proposals which appear to me not only legitimate in peace-time, but also likely to produce results. For the sake of clearness I am dividing this paper under three heads: (1) The Nature of the Problem, (2) A Short-term Policy, (3) A Long-term Policy.

*(1) Nature of the Problem.*

It was recognised by the Germans at the end of the last war that British propaganda had played a large part in breaking down German resistance. Hence the enormous importance attached by the present German Government to their own propaganda. It would probably be no exaggeration to say that Germany spends £5 million a year on propaganda and that a large part of this propaganda is very skilfully done.

That is one side of the picture. The other side is the German fear of counter-propaganda. That means that any propaganda done from here should be unobtrusive and unprovocative, as the German Government will do their best to counteract it or even to stop it, but it also means that our propaganda, if wisely done, may produce a big effect. Our propaganda therefore should base itself on letting the German public know about our own affairs and our own outlook and should refrain from criticism of German affairs. A totalitarian system, imposed and maintained by force, has its weakness as well as its strength, however much its weakness be concealed, whereas a democracy such as our own has its strength as well as its weakness, however much its weakness be exposed. In spite of all the efforts of totalitarian propaganda, British prestige still stands high in the world. The only point of view that can be put against the German in the world with any chance of success is the British, and I am inclined to think that the only point of view that can be put against the Nazi in Germany is equally the British. If Europe may have to choose between a Pax Germanica or a Pax Britannica, the issue may to some extent—and perhaps to a considerable extent—be determined by the success of British propaganda not only in the countries surrounding Germany, but in Germany itself. If, therefore, we are to tackle the problem at all we must do so in no niggardly fashion, but on an adequate scale. My present proposals assume that the funds required to give them effect could be made available.

(2) *Short-term Policy.*

With events moving so rapidly in Germany and elsewhere we should give our first attention to those measures likely to produce quick results. I divide these measures under four heads:—

- (a) Broadcasting.
- (b) Personal Contacts.
- (c) A British Organisation in Germany.
- (d) Literature.

(a) *Broadcasting.*

(i) The B.B.C. news bulletins in German now given out on the short and medium waves are being widely listened to in Germany. They are carefully prepared by the B.B.C. in daily consultation with the Foreign Office and are not being jammed. They may shortly be increased from 10 to 15 minutes.

(ii) Mr. Ogilvie, the Director-General of the B.B.C., has recently put to me a proposal for reciprocal talks with France and Germany and perhaps with other countries too. Briefly stated the proposal is that the B.B.C. should arrange for talks on their programme, perhaps once a week for a quarter of an hour, from France and Germany in English and to France and Germany in French and German respectively on the French and German programmes. These talks would be an extension of the reciprocal talks with America which have been conducted by the B.B.C. for some time past. The proposal is that the series should be experimental and for a limited period in the first instance.

I can see great advantage and no objection to having reciprocal talks with countries such as France, Portugal, Scandinavia, Roumania, &c., but in the case of Germany and Italy I feel that I should call the attention of the Cabinet to objections which may be raised and which will require careful consideration. A section of the public may well object to a German, chosen carefully by Dr. Goebbels, being allowed to present the German case to British listeners. There might be questions in Parliament and an outcry in part of the press. The B.B.C. might require the support of the Government in Parliament in meeting these criticisms.

It is clear to me that such objections would have some validity if, for example, Dr. Goebbels were free to launch his anti-Jewish propaganda on to the B.B.C. or if he were free to exploit this occasion for provocative remarks in other directions. Obviously, there would have to be a preliminary agreement to meet this point. It should be clearly understood by both parties that the talks should be something in the nature of a running commentary on matters which had interested the public in either country and should omit comments on foreign affairs. There is quite enough to say about the life and activities of the British public which would interest foreign listeners without embarking on the stormy sea of international controversy, and the same thing is true of Germany. If the German Government see any advantage to themselves in having these talks, they will accept such conditions as will make it possible to conduct them. If they do not, the proposal falls to the ground. If, on the other hand, an agreement can be secured, I believe we shall have found the most direct method of reaching the widest possible German public. Should Germany refuse, I see no harm in the gesture having been made, and I see no reason why the proposal should not be made to other countries which might be only too glad to accept it.

(iii) It is also possible to reach the German public by buying time for English programmes in German issued from the stations at Luxemburg, Strasbourg and Liechtenstein. The possibilities have been carefully examined by the Foreign Office, and I am assured that it can be done. The programmes would be sponsored in the normal way by a commercial firm such as a travel agency and would contain a general news review amongst other items. A specimen copy of such a review has been prepared. The cost of six programmes a week for three months put out by one or other of these three stations which normally broadcast in German is estimated at £6,000. The programmes would be submitted to the Foreign Office in advance and careful watch would be kept over them. Any participation by the British Government in these programmes could be effectively concealed.

(b) *Personal Contacts.*

Personal contacts between British and Germans are continuous, especially between business men. I suggest that we should make them as fruitful as possible. The Foreign Office, after reviewing the possibilities, attach special importance to business contacts, and I suggest, therefore, for the consideration of the Cabinet that an effort should be made through the Associated Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of British Industries to impress on firms dealing with Germany the national importance for their representatives, when travelling in Germany, to speak on the right lines, and perhaps also to be furnished with suitable literature about this country (I refer to this point later in this paper). I suggest that the Prime Minister or I myself should, in the first instance, consult Sir Charles Granville Gibson, of the Associated Chambers of Commerce, and Mr. Peter Bennett, of the Federation of British Industries. I do not wish to burden this paper with too many details, but I may say that this matter has been gone into with some care by my department, and I should be glad to know whether the suggestion is approved in principle.

Other forms of personal contacts, such as exchange visits of students, school-children, professional men, &c., might well be pursued by the British Council, but in my opinion the most useful contacts are those which already exist for normal commercial purposes between business men in the two countries.

(c) *A British Organisation in Germany.*

His Majesty's Embassy in Berlin have urged the establishment in Berlin of something like the British Library of Information in New York, which would be an official body under the aegis of the Embassy. A British Library of Information in Berlin would be mainly a reference library supplied with official publications and under a manager able to answer enquiries either verbally or by correspondence.

The idea is attractive, but I believe that equally satisfactory results might be obtained in a less sensational way by establishing an office of the Travel Association first in Berlin, and later at other provincial centres on the lines of the Paris office. This office would naturally be supplied with tourist literature and with general information about this country useful to tourists. It could easily be made into a centre of information about this country. The German Government have a similar office in London. An extra grant would have to be made to the Travel Association to enable them to extend their activities to Germany in this way. I trust that this suggestion will meet with the approval of the Cabinet.

(d) *Literature.*

The British Council are already preparing a series of pamphlets on British activities in different spheres. These pamphlets are to be issued separately and in book form as so many chapters of a book. They will be translated as necessary into foreign languages. But I suggest that in addition to this work the British Council should be asked to produce a monthly publication under some such title as a "Digest of British Achievement" of pocket size to contain suitable extracts from any publications with photographs and with short articles. Such a publication, which would be issued here in the normal way, might be taken by commercial representatives to Germany (and indeed to other countries) and shown to business men in Germany with whom they had contacts.

(3) *Long-term Policy.*

The British Council should be asked to pursue actively in Germany their normal work of cultural and educational propaganda. This could be done by exchange visits on a small scale, by giving scholarships to German students in British Universities, by sending lecturers, especially scientists, to Germany, both to the Deutsch-Englische Gesellschaft and to German Universities, and by supporting the existing British theatre in Berlin. There are many other cultural activities which need not be mentioned here.

I have put these activities last on this list, as it would take some time to realise any striking results.

(4) *Conclusion.*

I submit these proposals for urgent consideration by the Cabinet, and in doing so I wish to emphasise the importance which I attach to them and my hope that funds will in each case be made available for their execution. I am satisfied that money so spent may rightly be regarded as an important item in our general defence programme. If the Cabinet approve I shall instruct my department to work out the details under each head, and to submit in due course an estimate of the expense involved. I hope my colleagues will be disposed to agree with my view as to both the importance and the urgency of the matters I have raised.

H.

*Foreign Office, December 8, 1938.*

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